644 554 576 [101] It is to be noted that a gourdful of this water with millet flour on which a bit of karite butter is floating is a customary courtesy offering among the Mossi. It is most improper to greet or to receive a stranger by offering him plain water.

644 782 On the fourth or fifth day the Djiba Naba proceeds to Zoanghna (a village located two or three kilometers behind the government buildings) and there hands over a sheep and a cow to serve as offerings to the sacred amulets of the ancestors and to protect him from evil spirits and wicked people. He does not spend the night in this village but returns home immediately after the sacrifice.

644 788 Several days later the decision is made to install the new naba in his domain. A large number of soroné, drummers, and followers accompany him on what amounts to a kind of obligatory pilgrimage which we shall describe briefly.

The following itinerary is customary.

First, the Djiba Naba goes to Badnogo where he spends the night. The next day he goes on to Samba where he is offered water with flour in it, and for his part, he gives salt to be shared among the old women of the village.

One may ask why salt is given to the old women and not to the other people. The Mossi call old women nough' pouk ramba, [888] that is, those who, when blessing you, clasp their hands so as to make a higher power hear and grant their prayers.

641 788 431 [102] On the following day he proceeds to Tensobitenga where he remains for three days. Beer is prepared for him; he is given a cow for his followers and a wife for himself. At Nakamtenga, his next stop, the village chief welcomes him with a sheep and many baskets and bowls of sagbo (millet mush).

644 788 He does not remain here for the night but instead goes on to Koubri. This is the village where eunuchs formerly suffered the cruel operation of castration (1). The canton chief meets him, leads

839 304 681 1. Eunuchs. Bandits, thieves, murderers, and slaves or soroné (servitors) convicted of adultery with women of the nobility were the only ones sent to Koubri, a canton in the circle of Ouagadougou, to be castrated. This operation involved only the removal

644 during his peregrinations. He will bestow some of these on his followers
788 and keep the prettiest for himself.
431 In the old days, the Boulsa Naba, Boussouma Naba, Konkisitenga Naba, and all the others who were, so to speak, independent "rulers" of their lands never brought annual tribute to the Mogho Naba without sending gifts to his eldest son at Djiba.

In the same way, the canton chiefs were expected to make the same annual gifts to the Djiba Naba as to his father.

644 It should also be noted that chiefs who had quarreled with the
696 Mogho Naba and were in danger of being executed could readily obtain pardons by the expedient of buying the friendship of the Djiba Naba. The emperor, after all, was reluctant to distress his son by putting to death one of his intimates.

[107] Chapter 7

The Mossi Salute. Respect due the Home of a Naba.
The Cap. Precedence among Chiefs.
A Legend Concerning the Origins of Mossi Chiefdom.

Salutation of the Naba (Nab Pousgho)

647 The kombemba (canton chiefs) and nayirdamba (ministers and other court dignitaries), when calling upon the Mogho Naba, are required to remove their cap when they reach the threshold. They hand it to their sorongé (servitors) or followers. If they did not come on horseback, they must give their néoda (shoes) to a page and walk barefoot. In a word, they remove anything which might impede the execution of the very complicated Mossi salute.

The following passages concerning the Mossi salute are taken from Father Mangin.

Mossi Salute

644 "The Moaga puts down everything, load, hat, cap, and sword,
● 576 removes his shoes, and sits on the ground. He folds his legs slightly and bends the upper part of his body forward. The elbows rest on the ground, spread as far apart as possible. The forearms, folded

in front of the chest, and the half-closed hands with thumbs raised together strike [108] the ground three or four times. Then the Mossi raises his body a little and rubs the palms of his hands together. He never looks at the face of the person he is saluting, but keeps his eyes slightly lowered. It is truly a very humiliating posture, especially when the chief who is being saluted remains standing or on horseback, towering above his subordinate and barely according him a glance.

"The women, instead of striking the ground with their forearms, hit it with the elbows and raise their open hands, fingers extended, to shoulder height.

"The grand salute, (1) very rarely used, consists of turning

1. Father Mangin neglected to mention that this salute is used only when the chief or other personage has given a wife, a robe, or some other gift to the person who is saluting him. Furthermore, those present cover their foreheads with dust.

around after the ordinary salute has been completed, taking some dust in both hands, spreading it on the forehead, and then saluting once more.

"When two natives who know each other meet along the way, the younger of the two squats first and begins the salute, which the other acknowledges by squatting in turn. If they are carrying loads, they set them down before saluting. They are never in a hurry. Servants and women, when they walk before a chief, bow slightly and join their hands in front of the chest. Though complicated, the Mossi salute is rendered easily and gracefully by the natives; they are used to it from an early [109] age and never perform it in the clumsy and awkward manner which is theirs when they attempt to imitate the military salute."

Respect Due the Home of the Naba

554 The kombéré is absolute master of his territory. His subjects must show him the same deference as he himself shows to the Mogho Naba.

However, even though he is not a noble, a minister of the emperor need not remove his cap to respond to the salute of a kombéré. On the contrary, the latter is required to humble himself, to give way before him just as he would before the Mogho Naba.

644 The nabiga (son of a naba), nakomsé (descendants of naba) and, still more, an ordinary Moaga are all categorically forbidden to wear their shoes or their caps at the court of the naba. The only exception to the rule is when the person is a Moslem convert, but even then he always leaves his shoes at the door. He may, however, wear his cap or turban. Shoes and headgear may be put on again only after the subject is 300 meters from the house of the naba. Sometimes, in places where custom is rigorously enforced, the person must be out of sight.

[687] Any infraction of these rules was punished severely by the lash and by confiscation of property by the samand'kamba of the naba [110] when the offender was not of the nobility, that is, was neither nabiga nor nakombga.

291 It is interesting to note that wearing the fez, originally one of the badges of chiefdom, was forbidden to the nabiga and all the more to the talga (ordinary Moaga). Today it is commonly worn by men and youths since European traders and shops have made common an article which was once very rare.

● 576 643 Shaking hands. One seldom sees a naba extend his hand to one of his subjects or, more especially, to his brothers or fellow nobles (nakomsé).

There are two reasons for this prohibition: 1) the naba is supposed to maintain a certain distance between himself and his subjects, a normal practice; and 2) a superstitious belief has it that persons [154] harboring evil intentions toward the chief put magic powders on their hands to cause swellings which may develop into real abscesses.

576 643 Thus, although the Mogho Naba would not in the le to shaking hands with a Bambara or a Djerma, he would ished if a native Moaga -- even an official -- should off hand.

563 576 As soon as the children of a naba have reached the a cretion, they may no longer play with their "papa," eve shake hands with him. They must henceforth follow the rule which requires the Mossi salute, kantissé.

576 602 [111] Nowadays naba (kombemba) and nayiridamba of the emperor) understand the uselessness of such signs o Therefore, even though they continue to be less familiar relatives (brothers, uncles, and sons -- whom they regard they willingly offer their hands to Mossi of any standing a eigners.

644 Reception by the naba. 1) Up to the present time a some thirty-five years of French occupation, the way one ceived at the court of the emperor, which, of course, be servitors, has altered very little. Natives who are now of the administration and in business enterprises are still tre same footing as their less highly placed compatriots. No they required to perform the kantissé (Mossi salute) as de Father Mangin, but also afterwards they must sit on the g position that is difficult in European clothes. Foreigners Djerma, even Gourounsi) are offered seats because the so regard them as fellow countrymen.

[648]

645 576 352 177 2) By the ministers. At the present time all the emp ministers have comfortable houses and splendid drawing r furnished with Morris chairs and folding chairs. These se offered [112] to visitors of any standing, while benches t three meters long are reserved for persons of less conseque boys, cooks, circle guards, notables, etc.).

631 576 352 3) By the kombemba. Benches are always reserved f note or, if there are none, mats are provided. Some of t even own a few commonplace chairs and perhaps one or t chairs.

Hierarchies among the Ministers and Officials at the Court of the King of the Mossi

554 631 There exists a kind of hierarchy among the naba. One chief may have to uncover his head before greeting another because he is his "little brother" (yaoua) or because he is in the presence of a chief of higher rank (for instance, the "petty kings," dima).

It is extremely difficult to determine the hierarchy which exists among the kombemba because there are so many of them, but they respect it even today. It would be difficult to undertake research on the subject which has only local interest and would not benefit our work.

645 557 576 The following paragraphs, therefore, will deal only with the ministers and other officials at the emperor's court.

Mutual relations among the ministers before the French occupation. (a) The Ouidi-Naba, prime minister and chief of the cavalry. [113] After his appointment the Ouidi Naba is required only to call on the Mogho Naba. The other ministers and the notables at Ouagadougou must call on him. Naturally, by virtue of his rank, the Ouidi Naba is expected to offer them large quantities of beer and to have sheep and even cows slaughtered in their honor.

(b) The Larrhallé Naba, a minister also and guardian of the tombs. Despite what happened quite recently (March-April, 1929), the Larrhallé Naba is only required to call on the Ouidi Naba and, if he wishes to do so, on the Gounga Naba. He does not call upon the other ministers and officials.

(c) The Gounga Naba is required to call upon the two higher ministers, the Ouidi Naba and Larrhallé Naba. The other officials at court must call on him, and, like the Ouidi Naba, he offers them beer and meat.

(d) The Baloum Naba, the steward of the Mogho Naba and chief of the pages. Early in his term of office he must call upon the three principal ministers and upon the imam. No other visits are required of him, he does not call upon other court personages.

This stated, let us go on to the most important matter.

644 conferred by the Mogho Naba on the canton chiefs.
292 With the exception of the Tenkodogo Naba and, more re-
554 cently, the Boussouma Naba, neither of whom renders honors to the Mogho Naba, all ministers, other petty dima, and chiefs of Mossi cantons must take off his cap to greet the emperor.

576 (a) Between ministers. The Ouidi Naba does not remove his
554 cap for any of his colleagues.
645 The Larrhallé Naba, Gounga Naba, and Kamsaongo Naba are equals and greet each other with their caps on.

The Baloum Naba and Samandé Naba are also equals, and they do not take off their caps when greeting each other. However, they were required to remove their caps (pougla) and even to perform the kantissé in the presence of the three principal ministers.

[116] Next in importance are the Nemdo Naba or "chief of the meat" [in charge of slaughtering], the Poé Naba who is confessor to the emperor's wives, the Bend Naba, chief of the drummers, and, finally, a whole string of petty chiefs of no importance who can hardly be distinguished from the general populace and whom it would be fruitless to enumerate here.

The Poé Naba may keep his cap on when he is in the presence of the Baloum Naba or the Samandé Naba, but he must remove it for the other ministers and must even prostrate himself to perform the kantissé.

645 Not very long ago, when the province chiefs of Ouagadougou
574 possessed neither comfortable houses nor furniture, the ministers rarely visited each other. I have even once seen a minister sit on the ground in order to give his seat to one of his colleagues.

645 Whenever matters came up which required a meeting, the ministers met at night in one or another of their homes without the knowledge of the public.

645 Today, the principal ministers have proper reception rooms.
576 They can, therefore, remain seated when a more important colleague calls upon them and limit their special consideration of the visitor to offering him a Morris armchair or a folding chair.

701 The Tensoba, the minister of war, never takes off his cap for a
554 minister or a canton chief. He does so only before the emperor.
645

701 554 645 Formerly, when war broke out and he was summoned to [117] Ouagadougou, the Tansoba [sic] assembled the principal ministers of the Mogho Naba at the home of his host, and his word was final.

Aside from this special case, he might call upon a minister, but then a servitor always brought along the cushion on which he would sit until the minister receives him in his private quarters. He was never received in public.

Once inside, the Tansoba occupied the best seat, and the minister got down on the floor and performed the Mossi salute.

In sum, the Tansoba was held in higher esteem than any other personage at the king's court.

(b) At the present time. Today ministers often visit each other. 645 574 Since they have rapid means of transportation at their disposal, they regularly go about without escorts. Most often their visits are made in order to deal with matters of general interest.

When a minister calls upon another minister, he keeps his cap 645 on and neither removes his shoes nor performs the kantissé. They 576 are equals. This equality has been established by the local administration which has granted the same rights and salary to all. The 574 minister shakes hands with his colleague and takes a seat. He is served copious quantities of beer, and then he takes his leave.

In spite of assertions to the contrary, the Mossi empire is po- 442 litically disorganized. This accounts for the errors committed by the local administration and the [118] mistakes held against the ministers of the Mogho Naba who for a long time were granted too much power.

The Origin of Mossi Chiefdom (Legend), or the Way the Peulh, the Yarcé, and the Blacksmiths Salute Mossi Chiefs

773 184 576 The Peulh, the Yarcé, and, to a certain extent, the blacksmiths do not perform the kantissé (Mossi salute). They have a different way of saluting naba. A curious legend explains this phenomenon. However bizarre it may seem, it is not lacking in interest, and we shall tell it just as it was handed down to us.

796 769 Friday night he stays at the home of Bangr'Naba Sambo. Very early Saturday morning he returns home in time to be present when the Bend'Naba (chief of the drummers) comes to wish him a happy new year and a long life and to pray that Wenam (God) will spare him to [156] offer many more bascé (plural of basgha) in honor of his predecessors.

[431] It goes without saying that during the nights spent away from home the emperor receives many visitors and substantial gifts. The persons at whose homes he spends the night naturally give him the warmest possible welcome.

Preparatory sacrifices. These are performed inside the house of the Mogho Naba, and the details are known only to the following four persons: Mogho Naba, Emperor of the Mossi; Baloum Naba, chief stewârd and chief of pages; Zussoba Kassanga, chief eunuch and guardian of the harem; the pugtiéma, the first wife of the Mogho Naba.

796 769 787 It is known that animals are sacrificed, with the Mogho Naba himself holding the victim and pronouncing the sacramental words. Perhaps there is also worship of certain sacred fetishes. In any event, we are convinced that there is nothing involved in the ceremony which is contrary to the principles of French civilization since there is no human sacrifice. We should have liked very much to describe these ancient practices, but the secret has been well kept.

796 769 533 Celebration of basgha. As soon as the Mogho Naba appears in front of the zango (antechamber), the Bend' Naba beats a drum while calling the names of deceased naba, beginning with Naba Oubri, the founder of the Ouagadougou dynasty. [157]

As soon as the Bend'Naba stops playing, he and his followers are served sagbo (millet cakes); mouf (rice), dam (millet beer), and nemdo (meat).

796 769 [554] Likewise, the ministers and other court officials who come to greet tabo (the new year) are given dam, sagbo, rice, and meat by the Mogho Naba. The food is distributed to the dignitaries in the order of precedence, and the rest is reserved for the Bilbalessé and other followers of the ministers.

[576] About eight-thirty, the ministers and court officials say wennatassé, "God be with us," which means good bye, and then they return home.

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Above: The Mossi Salute.
Below A Naba and his Horsemen.

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566 may leave his master whenever he pleases, either to devote himself
M to trade or to enter the service of another man; but often he gets all
F his work from his master.

563 The Peul shepherds never were slaves of the Mossi, because they
M only knew how to watch the herds and were incapable of working the
F land. They were, nevertheless, held in severe vassalage by the Mossi,
[784] especially by the nabas, and served as victims in certain sacrifices.
Some Mossi sold by the Yarsé or by other Mossi have occasionally been
their slaves, especially in the Dori region called Gyémaré by the
natives.

/15/ Chapter 2. Administration

M
157 The power of the chiefs and the submission of their subjects are characteristic traits of Mossi country. The spirit of submission permeates the whole Mossi mentality. The Mossi are not particularly secretive or incommunicative, as the Bambara are said to be. On the contrary, they talk quite freely to their friends, even of their personal affairs; this does not mean that they are unable to keep a secret, especially if it is the king's secret. Two individuals have to be equals if there is to be some freedom between them; this freedom may develop into a certain closeness, but never into friendship in the highest sense of the term. If the Mossi appears secretive, it is because he is afraid to offend someone more powerful than himself. He always yields before a chief, before someone who "has the strength," as he puts it, while inwardly he may retain his own opinion and act as he pleases. When a chief talks, he hears nothing but these words
M in reply: bé néré, naba — "That's it, that's right. I agree with you."
576 The Mossi salute, formerly used in all the Black empires of the Sudan, especially in the courts of Ghana, Mali, and Gao, provides good evidence of this mentality. When we first enter the country as foreigners, we are shocked to see a man thus lower himself before another man. In order to salute, the Mossi puts down his load, hat, and sword, removes his shoes, sits on the ground, folds his legs slightly, and leans the upper part of his body forward. The elbows rest against the ground, as far apart as possible; the forearms, folded in front of

576 the chest with the hands half-closed and the thumbs raised, strike the ground together three or four times. The Mossi then raises his body a little and rubs the palms of his hands together. He never looks the person he is saluting straight in the face, but keeps his eyes slightly lowered. It is a truly humbled posture, especially when the chief who is being saluted remains standing or on horseback, towering above his subordinate, and barely according him a glance. The women, instead of beating upon the ground with their forearms, strike it with the elbows and raise their open hands, fingers extended, to shoulder height. The grand salute, very rarely used, consists of turning around after the ordinary salute has been completed, seizing some dust with both hands, spreading it on the forehead, and saluting once more.

When two natives who know each other meet along the way, the younger of the two squats first and begins the salute, which the other acknowledges by squatting in turn. If they are carrying loads, they set them down before saluting. They are never in a hurry. Servants and women, when they walk before a chief, bow slightly and join their hands in front of the chest, palms together. Though complicated, the Mossi salute is rendered easily and gracefully by the natives; they are used to it from an early age, and never perform it in the clumsy and awkward manner which is theirs when they attempt to imitate the military salute, so fine and noble when well done and so ludicrous when distorted by a Black.

622 643 Chiefs are designated by the generic term naba, but a distinction is made between naba and dimma. The latter is elected /16/ according to very precise rules, which we shall mention later, and his authority stems directly from this election. There are only five dimma among the Mossi: the Moro Naba, and the nabas of Fada, Tenkodogo, Boussouma, and Yatenga. The naba, on the other hand, receives his power from another chief more powerful than himself who has chosen him from several candidates.

643 645 Mossi country lies wholly under the authority of the Moro Naba who is assisted by five high ministers: the Widi Naba, Larlé Naba, Gounga Naba, Kamisoro Naba and Ballum Naba. The respective functions of these ministers are somewhat ill-defined. The Kamisoro 839 is a eunuch and chief of the eunuchs. Upon his death, since he leaves no heirs, all his property devolves to the Moro Naba. It was thus to the latter's advantage to make him wealthy and to present him with the finest district in the country. The Widi Nâba takes the place of the Moro Naba from the time of his death until the investiture

364 For the Mossi, as for all other men, life ends in death, with or without illness. The Blacks do not know how to prevent diseases, and they know very little about fighting them. Hygiene is almost unknown. The huts are poorly aired, the chickens and in general all the animals in the inner courtyard walk everywhere and foul everything. The courtyard is swept often, but the hut of the sheep and goats is located in the midst of the other dwellings; the horse is kept within the soukala [514] itself; and people relieve themselves anywhere, wherever they find a convenient spot. The manure is gathered in a heap, but it is kept next to the huts and gives off a nauseating smell and noxious miasmas, especially at the beginning of the rainy season.

515 The Mossi are not dirty, but they cannot be called clean. Those who dwell in villages abundantly supplied with water at all times are the cleanest. The women, who fetch water every day and thus have an opportunity to wash, are usually cleaner than the men. A Mossi never passes a pond without drinking copiously and washing all over, and this would seem to prove that those who go dirty do so unwillingly; they have no water nearby, and it would be too much trouble to go to the river to bathe. Clothing, especially breechcloths, is often repulsively dirty. This is because washing wears out clothes, and who knows when new ones will be available? No wonder disease has such a hold on this people.

855 165 Child care is quite rudimentary: a few baths; enemas two or three times a day, without which it is said their bowels would not move; and that is all. At the slightest indisposition the sorcerer is consulted, or else the child is left to himself; he will get well or die, and nothing is done about it. As a consequence, child mortality is very high.

758 Those who fall prey to a contagious disease are not isolated. A healthy child lies on the same mat as one with smallpox, a leper drinks from the common gourd unless his lips are covered with sores. People do, however, hesitate to sit where a syphilitic person with sores previously sat. The education of the Mossi in matters of hygiene is wholly yet to be learned.

576 On meeting someone, Mossi politeness requires that an inquiry be made about his health and that of all his relatives. The response invariably is "So-and-So is well," and the other in turn responds, "May God permit his health to wax." It is only after a little conversation that a certain person is said to be ill or to be getting better.

195 It is not said that someone died, but that he ran short of strength, that he passed away, that he left us.

124 The problem is aggravated by the fact that the Mossi possess no religious theories and are not in the habit of discussing their beliefs. They are bewildered by the slightest "Why," the most elementary "how is it so." To fulfill the needs of our European minds, therefore, it proved necessary to put a little order and clarity into the ideas we gleaned here and there. In this area especially we have avoided as much as possible any tendency to systematize, and we can say that there is nothing of our own in the two chapters that follow. We have listened to the natives, elicited explanations, asked questions, and made note of the answers. We shall now transcribe the results. Of course the answers did not always agree, and we /78/ were forced to make choices on the basis of those testimonies which appeared most worthy of trust. The disagreements were on matters of detail only, and on the whole the statements persistently agreed on the most important points. In any case, whenever a serious doubt arises, we shall be careful to point it out.

776 576 How could Lt. Marc ever write, "We do not believe that the Mossi have the concept of a single God and Creator"? (1) The idea of God

1. Marc, Au pays des Mossi /In Mossi Country/, p. 158.

is everywhere to be found among this people. The merest wish, the simplest greeting, includes the name of God. When someone is going away, the person who is leaving and those who are staying hold the following exchange: "May God be with me," says the one who goes; "May God see you home! May God cause you to return! May God move your legs!" answer those who remain.

Persons who receive gifts tell their benefactor: "May God keep you! May God cause you to remain a long time (on this earth)! May God reward you! May God repay you!"

If a friend is seen wearing a new garment, this occasions another greeting: "May God allow you to wear it out before you discard it!"

If he is eating, he is told: "May God cause you to profit by it!"

If he comes to announce the birth of an heir: "God grant that you may suspend him from your shoulder!" /Tr., Mossi children from age [854] two or thereabouts are often carried astraddle the hip and holding on to the shoulder./

If he is leaving to return on the same day: "May God grant us the pleasure of talking to each other!"

776 At the end of the day, the Mossi greet each other as follows: "May
576 God grant you a tommorrow!" To which they must reply: "May God give you a good morrow!"

On festive days those who meet tell each other: "May God lead you to the next year! May God allow you to see a new year!"

God gives health, maintains it, and restores it to the sick: "May God give you health!" they wish each other, "May God increase your health! May God make you happy!"

Those who are in danger, or ill, are told: "May God keep you from misfortune! May God restore your health! May God come with health and a cooling breeze!"

When death has struck, sympathy is offered to the family as follows: "May God hinder the day (of death)!"

An arriving horseman is told: "May God help you dismount!" And to the man who has just lost a horse: "May God restore your tethering post!" (For only those who own a horse have a tethering post.)

776 When asked, "Who gives power to the medicines and to the amulets?" a Mossi invariably replies that it is God.

God knows everything and is called upon as a witness: "By God!" If unjustly accused, the Mossi calls upon God: "God sees inside me, /79/ and He knows that there is nothing there!" And if someone does not know the name for something, he adds immediately, "But God knows it."

God disposes of everything, and the Mossi often say among themselves: "If God grants me the day after tomorrow, I shall come"; "he was about to fall, but God came to his aid"; "we start talking in the morning and request God's protection."

God is everywhere, and it is impossible to hide from Him. God preserves us, and one naba who bore no trace of Islamism once told me: "We are in God's hand; we are God's sheep, and He watches over us as my son watches over my own sheep." It sounds like an echo of the Gospels: "I am the good shepherd." It would be easy to furnish other examples. God is superior to all spirits. He created them and He sends them to man, but He did not make them evil. Nevertheless, God may help us obtain revenge from our enemies, and His sacred name often recurs in curses: "May God suspend from your neck the bag of poverty! May God destroy you! May He destroy him completely! May God burn him in the fire!" (2) Every

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15. Sosra sen kaosda, wata ne korg' wenbsego.
When a conversation lingers, the bag is fingered.
(Familiarity breeds contempt.)

16. Pu' pidya, bango luéya.
Full belly, gagged indiscretion.
(Those who need you are discreet).

17. Sad' no' o, yid noa' karga.
A good laugh is better than a chicken leg.
(A warm reception is better than a good meal.)

18. Ned' kon wok' a bâka, ti pemsom yi ye.
You don't cut open your shoulder just for the air to come out.
(Never abandon a friend in need.)

19. Bunbundi ka dod' zalol'n yé.
Those who give their best do not go away empty-handed.
(Work hard, do your best, there is no lack of true wealth.)

181 153 The Mossi likes to talk. Although he has few ideas of his own, if one knows how to make use of his familiar experiences to bring him to a higher level, he follows the reasoning easily, understands quite promptly what is told him, and grasps the train of ideas and even the finer gradations of meaning. In short, he has quite a noteworthy aptitude for assimilation. Often I explained to a chief in broad outline the handling of a gun or the mechanism of a watch or bicycle. If an outsider came by, the naba relayed the explanations to show that he was intelligent and that he had grasped them properly. Indeed, I was often surprised at how well most of them did this.

They like pictures. At first they often hold them upside down, but a few explanations are usually sufficient to make them grasp their meaning. First they recognize familiar things, such as people, horses, dogs, and trees, and they explain them to each other. They come to understand the scene and the reasons for the attitudes of the figures pictured.

181 522 576 /112/ In conversations, when they are not ill at ease, they are lively, merry, and they like to laugh. It is a compliment on their part when they say that someone laughs easily. They are sometimes humorous, they understand innuendoes, but they know how to keep their distance and do not permit themselves any familiarities, even in words, toward their superiors.

539 The goat replied, "The hyena should give all of herself." The lion told the hyena to remove her own leg. The hyena bit herself. It hurt, and she ran away. The lion caught her and killed her. The goat ran away with his salt and went home.

This is why the hyena attacks livestock.

181 The Mossi are polite. This is the quality that first strikes all those 576 who have dealings with them. We mentioned earlier that the natives always greet one another. In fear of their nabas, the Mossi maintain before them a respectful, almost humiliating posture. They are very attentive to important outsiders and see to it that they should lack nothing a Mossi might wish: a sitting stool and mat are brought in immediately along with the drink; the food is abundant and usually clean and carefully prepared.

181 The Mossi are very hospitable and willingly give alms for its own 574 sake, that is, to poor people who cannot repay. They are generous and always share with their neighbors, and when they have millet beer, they hand it out liberally. No woman who is brewing beer would allow a stranger of some importance to go by without offering him a gourdful, and she is displeased if he refuses. An object once offered is never retrieved, and stratagems must be used to make a native take back under some pretext what he has given away.

576 /114/ The Mossi always offer things with the right hand. It is an insult to pass the gourd or to take it with the left hand. The oldest person in a group helps himself from a dish first, and all those present follow in order of seniority, down to the youngest. On the other 264 hand, the eldest stops eating first, and it is the youngest who eats the 27 last bits and cleans the gourd. When drinking, however, the most eminent person drinks the last drop.

576 Children do not greet their parents in the home, because it is their 574 home; but if a properly brought-up girl sees her mother coming with a full jar or a basket, she rushes to take the load from her, even if the woman is only a few yards from the soukala. When a friend has come to visit, it is considered good manners to carry her load for some distance when she leaves. In any case, visitors are always seen on their way, sometimes to the outskirts of the village.

576 The Mossi do not lack tact and sensibility. When they want something, they first delegate a friend with a gift, then send word that they have a small matter to discuss; sometimes they hint at what it may be and leave without waiting for an answer. Some time later

576 they send their friend once again to indicate what they desire, or they go and bring up the matter themselves.

181 577 Being sensitive and capable of attachment, even of affection, the Mossi readily acknowledge the good done to them and seek to express their gratitude. If they can offer a gift, such as eggs, millet, honey, a chicken, they offer it unobtrusively. "Take this millet for your horse; give this chicken to your child." If they have nothing to give, they watch for every opportunity to spare their benefactor work or trouble. They take the hoe from him to weed his field or help him lift a load. They show their gratitude as they can, through action rather than words.

181 461 The Mossi are not lazy. As a rule it may even be said that they like work. Lazy people are pointed at, avoided, and despised. During the winter season everyone must be in the fields from morning to night, men, women and children alike. Only those who cannot work or who have household tasks to perform stay home. The Mossi work very hard at this time of year. During the dry season, on the other hand, they enjoy some leisure. Although most of them weave during these months or travel for trading purposes, while the children cut grass to thatch the roofs and the millet is threshed, it must be said that it is not possible to work in these sun-scorched lands as it is in our temperate European counties. Besides, why work when there are so few outlets? Since the time when the French peace made the roads safe, trade has been on the upsurge. Now, sure of reaping the fruit of their toil, the natives are expanding their crops and every year the fields encroach further upon the bush. All the important villages are surrounded with cultivated fields as far as the eye can reach. If the Mossi do not work more then they do, therefore, it is not from laziness but from /115/ lack of outlets. It seems likely that the country will develop quite rapidly as soon as channels of communication open it to European trade.

181 Such are, in succinct and impartial outline, the qualities and defects of this people. Which of the two preponderate? It is for the reader to judge. In our opinion the Mossi are a very worthy people capable of a brilliant future, but under one condition, that they become Christians. Their most striking characteristics, as we have stated over and again, are their religious sense and their absolute submission to all that bears the stamp of authority.

843 already borne children. Among the common people, the woman works up to the time of her delivery. Like other Sudanese women, the Mossi woman is inured to the pains of childbirth and devoid of any nervousness.

843 787 When their wives are pregnant, the Mossi often go to consult the baga /sorcerer/ to find out what sacrifices should be made so the event will turn out well. As he is wont to do, the baga indicates such-and-such a sacrifice. He also prognosticates on request whether to expect a boy or a girl.

843 755 If the pregnant woman has been frightened by an evil spirit (kinkirga), she summons the tipa who washes her body with a specially prepared liquid or merely administers violent blows on her head with tarakanré (cowhide sandals of which we spoke earlier /not translated/) to drive out the evil spirit.

844 The Mossi woman may give birth only in her own hut. She would consider it a shameful thing if the child were born in her husband's private hut.

When a woman gives birth, she makes a confession to the old women who assist her, because she fears too much suffering or an unsuccessful delivery if she does not confess the faults she has committed. The old women go and repeat them to the husband, who says, "That's all right, I knew it all," and forgives her. In short, the torments of childbirth are put to use by the old women to procure a confession.

There are midwives among the Mossi (in Mossi, pougourorosa). They are paid by the husband. However, they do not receive a [431] salary, properly speaking, but rather a gift (a piece of salt, a skirt cloth, etc.). If nothing is given to them, they cannot and do not make any demands.

In addition to the midwife, the old women of the compound, quarter, or village come and help the patient.

844 576 For the delivery itself, the Mossi woman goes down on hands and knees, her arms stretched out upon the ground, her body slightly inclined from head to hips, in the posture ordinarily used to salute or to remain before a chief. The midwife stays behind her.

844 When the child is born, the women present heat up a very strong concoction with red pepper, soumbara /locust bean/, etc. The woman is made to swallow this, and it is supposed to foster the emission of blood and all other impure matter. Then she is washed with warm water. Her loins are also rubbed vigorously so that the strain undergone in childbirth will not be felt there later. Likewise,

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tween the Mossi and several other ethnic groups. In each instance the structural relationship in which joking occurs is characterized by the five features listed above.

Joking with the Mother's Brother

The relationship with a maternal uncle is marked by all five of the structural features mentioned. Separation results from the rules of patrilineal descent and inheritance rules, from patrisib exogamy, and from the general observance of patrilocal residence. The relationship is reciprocal in that a mother's brother serves throughout Ego's life as an important alternative source of emotional, economic, and social support: he often acts as intermediary in disputes between Ego and his parents or the elders of his lineage; he gives Ego frequent gifts; and residence in the mother's patriclan is the most frequent alternative to patrilocality. In turn Ego, as a result of the permissive relationship he enjoys with the spirits of his deceased cognatic kinsmen, often serves their living descendants as an intermediary in their ritual efforts to maintain a secure relationship with the ancestral spirits.

Ambivalence between Ego and his mother's brother and her other kin results from the conflicting sources of "conjunction" and "dissociation" just mentioned. The conflict between a strong affective bond—a "feeling" of kinship—and a system of inheritance which denies it jural recognition generates frustration. The ambivalence in the relationship is manifested not only by joking, which is asymmetrical—with Ego being the more aggressive—but by theft as well. Perhaps as partial compensation for his inability to inherit matrilaterally, Ego is permitted to steal his mother's brother's property during his lifetime and can also make off with the beer and some of the animals collected for his funeral.

As for equality of status, the descent groups of Ego and mother's brother are structurally equivalent. Although their respective positions within these two groups differ, the permissiveness of Ego's relationship to his maternal uncle absolves him from recognition of the canons of comportment that otherwise prevail among the Mossi in relations between persons of differing status. Indeed, disregard for such status differences is part of the "joke." Independence is assured by the fact that Ego and his mother's brother are members of autonomous descent groups and that each is responsive only to the authority of his respective lineage elders.

Joking with a Mother's Brother's Wife

Joking between Ego and his mother's brother's wife is to be regarded as a separate relationship because of her nonmembership in the mother's brother's descent group, but certain of the structural circumstances are similar. The source of separation from the mother's brother's wife is evident. The reciprocal tie that unites them is indirect; when Ego is received warmly in his mother's brother's household it is the wife of the latter who prepares the food he is given. Similarly, as a member of her husband's patriclan, she benefits

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III

KINGSHIP AND CHIEFSHIP

Mossi traditional government revolved around the Nanamse, as all Mossi 642
rulers were called. Sometimes the title was also given on an honorific basis to commoners, serfs, or slaves who performed specific duties for a Mogho Naba or a district chief; but the only true Nanamse were persons who traced their descent from Ouedraogo and Oubri.

The heads of the four Mossi kingdoms—the Mogho Naba of Ouaga- 642
dougou, the Yatenga Naba, the Tenkodogo Naba, and the Fada-N'Gourma 643
Naba—were supreme in their own realms, but there was considerable rivalry among them throughout Mossi history.[1] In terms of closeness of descent from the nation's founders, the Tenkodogo Naba came first, the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou second, and the Yatenga Naba third. The Naba of Fada-N'Gourma was outside the hierarchy. As time passed, the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou gradually became more powerful than the other rulers, even though he recognized the seniority of Tenkodogo and, as we shall see, had difficulty exercising his seniority and supremacy over the Yatenga. Because he was the pre-eminent Mossi ruler, the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou set the general pattern of kingship and chiefship. The heads of the other kingdoms, principalities, districts, and villages tried to approximate the pomp and ceremony of the Ouagadougou court as closely as their resources and etiquette permitted. The pattern of chiefship among the Mossi in general thus differed little from that of the Ouagadougou kingdom.

The Mossi of Ouagadougou believed that their Mogho Naba was supe- 643
rior to all other kings. They believed that his realm was the largest in the world, and that no other king was so rich and powerful. He was so awe-inspiring, so "like the sun," that no one dared to look upon his face. It was [516]
forbidden to touch his hand, or speak to him from any but a kneeling posi- [576]
tion with the forehead touching the ground. People were expected to hesitate before pronouncing his name, and no other person was allowed to bear

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the name of the current ruler. When Crozat asked one of his Mossi bearers why Boukary Koutou had chosen a title that means "elephant," the man declared, "He is an elephant; he is king of all kings as the elephant is king of all animals; a great elephant-king he is."[2] Another Moaga, meeting Crozat on the road to Ouagadougou, told him to be prepared to meet a monarch "whose riches are inexhaustible and whose splendor is marvelous. He and his family wear only the most admirable European clothes; a thousand horses stand before his door, and there are more than a thousand women in his house. He is served by one hundred eunuchs; he commands as master 333 chiefs; and when he speaks to them it is as though God himself had spoken; everyone bows down before him and obeys."[3] Crozat, looking at the Mogho Naba through European eyes, did not find the "great king" he had expected. Yet he and later European visitors to the Mossi capital did affirm that all Mossi officials and district chiefs prostrated themselves in obeisance to their sovereign, even if they did not subsequently follow his instructions.[4]

Many rituals associated with the person and court of the Mogho Naba served to emphasize the high esteem in which he was held by his subjects. For example, the sovereign showed himself every morning at a ceremony called "Ouend pous yan" (literally, "God rises," or "the sun rises") that survives to this day. The name of this ceremony has led many scholars and travelers to assert that traditionally the Mogho Naba was considered a divine king. Dim Delobson states that this ceremony "shows the regard which the Mossi have for their chief, since they compare him to the sun, and thus to a 'god.'"[5] However, the Mossi do not now and probably never did regard their monarchs either as gods or as divine kings. There is a great deal of difference between regarding a man as "powerful and brilliant" like the sun and regarding him as divine. As a matter of fact, the Mossi very often dramatize in humorous fashion the all-too-human frailties of their rulers, without ever considering it sacrilegious to do so. On the other hand, the Mogho Naba, as the supreme ruler, was expected to follow faithfully the strict etiquette demanded by his exalted position.

The morning ceremony was opened by the ruler's chief page, the *soghone-kasanga*, who sprinkled a phylacteric solution around a throne (*guere*) in the courtyard in front of a reception room called the *zongo*. Other pages (*soghondamba*) brought out a large cushion (*naghpure*), the ruler's sword, and other personal accouterments, and placed them on the throne. Still other pages aided the Mogho Naba in his toilet. He was clothed in a large red robe, which symbolized the rising sun; he wore a bonnet surmounted by silver streamers (*wazourfou sebere*), which represented the sun itself.

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sented the sun itself. The toilet was performed in complete silence, for no one was allowed to speak to the monarch until after the ceremony. Meanwhile, in the courtyard, the court dignitaries, visitors, and the musicians and minstrels (*bendere*) took their places. The provincial ministers sat on their respective stones (*coganaramse*), and the visitors sat by their hosts. The pages at the door of the zongo awaited the moment when the Mogho Naba and his escort would emerge from the zongo. On seeing the two pages who preceded the monarch, they snapped their fingers as a signal to the still silent bendere.

On seeing the monarch, the chief musician, the Bendere Naba, rubbed his fingers across the top of his drum to produce the sound of a lion's growl, and the other drummers and violinists played the royal air, "Ouend pous yan." The head guard, the Kambo Naba, and his men, carrying guns, walked up from the side and knelt down facing the assembly. And the *samande-kamba*, the "servants of the courtyard," came with heavy batons to guard against crimes of lese majesty. From the wings came a groom with a partly saddled ceremonial horse. As soon as the monarch was seated on his throne, his two pages moved to the front and knelt down facing the courtyard. The salutations now began. The first group of ministers, led by the Baloum Naba and including the Samande Naba, the Samande Nabila, the Ouedrange Naba, the Kamsaogho Naba, and the Zusoaba Kasanga, left their stones and came to the throne with slow steps and bowed heads. A few yards from the monarch, they knelt on the ground, and with their fingers folded and their thumbs in the air, leaned forward, struck the ground with both hands three times, and then rubbed the palms of their left hands with the fingers of their right. Then they arose, and with heads still bowed walked backwards to their places.[6] With the music still playing, another group of ministers, led by the Ouidi Naba and including such men as the Gounga Naba, the Larhalle Naba, and the Pwe Naba, saluted the ruler in the same manner. On Fridays and other Islamic holy days, the Moslem Imam representing the Ouagadougou congregation read aloud from the Koran. This part of the ceremony ended when the Mogho Naba rose, and, with the measured steps and swaying gait that signified royalty, retired to the zongo, preceded by his two pages.[7]

A few minutes later, the monarch returned to the courtyard without his red robe and glittering headdress. There was a second round of salutations comparable to the first, but this time the Ouidi Naba and his group did not appear unless it was an important occasion or important guests were present. When this part of the ceremony was over, the monarch called for his half-saddled horse and announced that he wished to go to

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643 La, a village near Koudougou district. His eldest wife, the *Pughtiema*,
796 appeared carrying her household utensils in order to accompany her husband. However, all the ministers, led by the Kamsaogho Naba, implored the monarch to have his horse unsaddled and to postpone the trip until the following day. Feigning anger, the Mogho Naba reluctantly agreed to remain in the capital, ordered his horse unsaddled, dismissed his wife, and re-entered the palace.[8]

173 The tradition about the origin of this ritual reveals something of the
643 Mossi attitude toward the human frailties of their rulers. It appears that
796 Poko, the favorite wife of Mogho Naba Waraga (ca. 1660–80), asked permission to visit her father at La, and that he refused to grant her request because of his love and admiration for her. Nevertheless, she continued to ask him for permission, and after her third request he granted her wish and sent a page and a small girl with her as chaperons. When Poko did not return to the palace on the third day, Naba Waraga sent two pages to her father's compound to fetch her, and here they discovered that she had died. Fearing the king's wrath toward persons who brought bad tidings, the pages did not report back to him but notified the ministers of Poko's death. When subsequent messengers also failed to return, the king decided to go to La. The following day, after the morning ceremonies, he ordered his horse saddled and commanded the Pughtiema to get ready to accompany him on his journey. But the ministers, anxious to protect him from grief, told him that a great king never followed a mere woman under any circumstances and persuaded him not to depart. The monarch went back into the palace, and the dignitaries ordered the horse unsaddled and sent it away. Shortly afterwards, the king changed his mind and decided to go to La, but he was beseeched not to do so. He swore that he would leave the following morning, and that if he were prevented from doing so, he would advise all his descendants to try to go to La every morning until one of them succeeded.[9]

643 At the end of this ceremony, a page gave the ministers an ample supply
644 of beer and kola nuts. The Moslems were given presents of kola nuts and
692 millet water (*zom kom*) sweetened with honey, since they were forbidden
576 to drink millet beer. Later in the morning, the Mogho Naba left the palace
[431] and entered the zongo, where he greeted his visitors, accepted gifts from visiting chiefs and subjects, dispensed gifts in turn, and presided over the court of justice. Anyone who went to see the ruler had to be accompanied by his provincial minister or his host—regardless of whether it was his purpose to pay a courtesy visit, to pledge allegiance, to plead for aid, or to give
643 testimony in a lawsuit. Pages moved back and forth between the palace
644 and the courtyard, dispensing kola nuts and beer or millet water prepared
576

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by the sovereign's wives. Other pages waited upon the monarch, and accompanied him when he moved about the courtyard. When the ruler drank any liquid, the pages rubbed the palm of one hand with the fingers of the other; when he sneezed, everyone clapped; and when he stepped out to urinate, a page accompanied him, turned his back to him, knelt down, and saluted by rubbing his palm.

When the Mogho Naba had finished his morning audiences, he entered his palace for a solitary meal. This meal was prepared by one of his young wives, who tasted it in his presence before giving it to the page who served him.[10] After eating, the monarch rested for a few hours; then he emerged into the courtyard to grant audiences and hear court cases until sunset. At that time he retired to his palace, and those courtiers who were not connected with the evening ceremonies returned to their homes.

The ceremony that closed the day at the monarch's court was called "Kwaga Basgha" (literally, "final meal"). This ceremony still survives. As soon as the sun began to set, the samande-kamba took their heavy batons and stood guard to prevent unauthorized persons from coming near the *namtibo* (royal amulets). The Baloum Naba and the Bendere Naba entered the palace courtyard and knelt before the zongo. The chief page then brought out the *kwaga*, a pottery vessel containing a fire ritually associated with the namtibo.[11] The vessel was placed on the ground, and the page blew on the fire to make it burn brightly. Meanwhile, the Bendere Naba rubbed his fingers across his drum to make the growl of a lion. When the fire finally died out, the Zusoaba Kasanga and the Baloum Naba closed the ceremony by rising, coming together, and saluting the namtibo in the traditional Mossi manner. (The Mogho Naba did not attend this ceremony.) Before the officials left for the night, the pages gave them pots of beer prepared by the royal wives. Sometimes these officials visited the Mogho Naba before they retired to their compounds. Once these men had departed, the pages served the ruler his evening meal, which again had been prepared by one of his young wives.

During the hours of darkness the Mogho Naba conducted many secret affairs of state and conversed with the members of his household. Persons seeking the nam of a deceased relative were often granted audience at night, as were litigants in court cases. When there were no pressing matters of state, the ruler gathered some of the royal wives around him and discussed family affairs, which protocol forbade him to discuss during the day. Some rulers reportedly disguised themselves and visited the wards of the town in the company of a young man from the palace, in an effort to learn things that did not ordinarily come to a ruler's attention.

The Mogho Naba slept in a grass hut in the palace compound. Two

634 A man usually heard about his nomination through his "friends" (usu-
645 ally pages) long before the Baloum Naba had received instructions from the
Ouidi Naba to summon him to the palace. Nevertheless, protocol demanded
● [576] that he show proper humility and surprise at receiving the news, and that
he be tardy in arriving at court. When he arrived, he was taken before the
Ouidi Naba, who asked him three times, "Did your [father] say who should
be his successor?" To this the nominee replied each time, "No, Naba! My
[father] did not say who should replace him. You may appoint anyone you
wish, even if he is a blind man or a leper." The Ouidi Naba then asked the
candidate, "Which of the nakomse do the district people prefer?" The can-
didate's standard reply was, "That is the affair of the Mogho Naba. The
people will accept anyone, even a blind man or a leper." This question was
asked three times, and each time the candidate gave the same answer. The
Ouidi Naba then declared, "The Mogho Naba has given you the nam of
your [father]." Upon hearing these words, the Samande Kasma (head ser-
vant of the palace) came up to the new chief and removed his sheepskin
mantle, while the samande-kamba took their heavy batons and chased away
the other pretenders who, having heard about the election, had come to the
palace. The samande-kamba then bore the new chief on their shoulders to
the *tomboko* (a circle filled with sand in the courtyard). To the accompani-
ment of the royal airs played by musicians under the direction of the Ben-
dere Naba, he took sand and poured it on his head as a sign of submission
to the Mogho Naba. The ruler's wives and the courtiers surrounded the
new chief, raised their hands over his head, and shouted their praises to the
Mogho Naba. Then the new chief showed his respect for all the ministers
[576] and important men, in order of rank, by falling on his knees before them in
the traditional Mossi salute. He then went to the Bendere Naba's shed,
where he stood in the middle of the musicians and made a speech, the leit-
motiv of which became his ruling title. The present chief of Nobere, whose
name is Naba Boulga ("Well"), says that he made the following speech
when he was nominated: "I am like a well; he who opens me will profit
greatly." After the new chief had thus "taken a name," he came to the
zongo to "drink the namtibo."

634 The drinking of the namtibo was the highlight of the election ceremony
[778] because it strengthened the link between the new chief and his ancestors
and provided the ritual sanction for loyalty, obedience, and service to the
Mogho Naba.[48] After the new chief had drunk the namtibo, he called upon
the ancestors to kill him if he should ever betray the Mogho Naba or fail to
[641] render him homage and faithful service. This oath was the sign for the un-
successful candidates to pledge their allegiance to the new chief. Then they

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634 The Kombere Naba, as the person who had "eaten the nam" of the district, was infused with some of the power and authority of the Mogho Naba and had the right to use force to maintain this power and authority. He was [576] respected, and people uncovered their heads and removed their slippers in his presence. Unlike the Mogho Naba, the Kombere Naba was permitted to eat with his peers. But whenever he drank the musicians made a roar-like sound with their instruments, and when he sneezed his attendants clapped. These rituals were rigidly adhered to because the Kombere Naba was readily accessible to the populace and might easily have lost their respect if he behaved in an undignified manner. He emphasized his social distance from them by never visiting the market place, and he did not go anywhere without a large entourage.

The Kombere Naba performed ceremonies and duties that were similar to but simpler than those of the Mogho Naba, and he was surrounded by officers bearing the same titles as those in the capital. But, as will be shown later, these officials had fewer and sometimes different duties than the courtiers at Ouagadougou. Some district chiefs had as many pages and wives as the Mogho Naba, but this was as much a result of their own desires as of their popularity with the local people. The death and funeral rites of a [766] district chief were not as elaborate as those of a Mogho Naba. They included [788] the circumambulation of the chief's compound by the principal heir and heiress, the symbolic reign of the Napoko, and the banishment of the Kourita.[41]

634 Every district chief, whether a Mogho Naba's vassal or a Dim's subordi-778 nate, was empowered to bestow the nam on his own subordinates. These [622] might be other district chiefs, but most often they were village chiefs. The circumstances under which a Kombere Naba received the authority to grant the nam to another Kombere Naba were usually complex and sprang from rebellions and dynastic changes. Once granted, this authority was seldom revoked, but the district chief had to report to his immediate superior, a Mogho Naba or Dim, whenever he wished to confer the nam upon another district chief.

634 In some cases the Mogho Naba invested a district chief himself, and 175 afterward placed him under the control of a neighboring district chief. For 669 example, the chiefs of two districts, Vooko and Nobila, were always installed 778 by the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou, but were supervised by the Nobere district chief. This practice dates back to the civil war involving Mogho Naba Sagha I (ca. 1787–1803), in which chiefs of Vooko and Nobere sided with the loser. The Mogho Naba executed the local rebels and placed one of his sons in Nobere. He then divided Vooko into two districts, placing a younger son in the one he called Nobila (little Nobere) and subjecting him

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692 634 695 or because the litigants had rejected the village chief's verdict). The chief then asked the plaintiff or "the people of X village" to state their case. Someone usually spoke up, and after he had finished, the chief asked the defendant or defendants to do likewise. The litigants were then asked to produce reputable witnesses to support or refute the testimony.

[641] [562] [567] Witnesses had to be male, adult (to have begun to "push a beard"), and free. Women and bondsmen had no legal personality before a Mossi court. A slave was represented at court by his master, and a woman by her husband (and, by extension, by his patrilineage). In marital quarrels or property suits, a woman was usually represented by her patrilineage. Only if [576] she alone could give the required evidence was she allowed in court. When she was asked to testify, she knelt, and spoke in a high, thin, soft voice, thus showing extreme respect to the chief and proper deference to the court. Except for these restrictions, any person could be called in as a witness. [578] Tempers often ran fairly high among the litigants' relatives and friends while they gave their testimony and argued the case, but their physical separation and their respect for the chief prevented abuse and fighting. Anyone who started a fight in court was liable to a beating by the samandekamba.

[674] The Mossi believed that most people, given sufficient reason, would commit any crime. Thus they examined the litigants carefully and at great length in an attempt to "get behind" the offense. The district chief interrogated the litigants, but the dignity of the court prevented him from arguing with them. As a matter of fact, most of the cross-examination was done by the litigants themselves. From time to time, the village administrator and the chief's confidants asked brief, direct questions. When a woman was involved, the chief's Pughtiema usually listened to the proceedings from behind a wall and questioned her. When all the evidence was in, the chief either rendered his verdict without delay or retired to the zongo to confer with his confidants and the village administrator. He took the latter course whenever he felt that further discussion was necessary or that false testimony was confusing the issue. Not until he felt that he had the facts well in hand did he return to the court to render his verdict.

The Mossi did not use ordeals in court except in the "chastity trials" conducted by the Pwe Naba. Some litigants called upon the ancestors to kill them if they were not telling the truth; others went to earth shrines and drank an infusion of dust to show that they were not afraid of the spirits who wrought vengeance on the guilty. However, such acts were never carried out in court and thus were of no use to the chief.

[600] The following case, tried in a district court in 1956, illustrates the Mossi

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vals. Being monarchs of the Mossi, they could not do otherwise. A few days before the Moslem feast of Tabaski (called *Kibsa* by the Mossi), the Mogho Naba sent the Imam of Ouagadougou cattle and sheep to be sacrificed on the holy day. On the day of the festival, the Mogho Naba and his entourage went to the mosque and joined the Imam and his flock in prayer. After the ceremony the sovereign returned to his palace and ordered that a well-washed sheep be given to the Imam for a sacrifice. This Moslem sacrifice was performed in the palace courtyard, and the Mogho Naba himself held the tail of the animal while the Imam officiated. The Mogho Naba afterward ordered his servants to provide millet water and food for his Moslem subjects. Similar ceremonies were held in all of the districts and villages where Moslems lived.

The feast at the end of the Moslem month of Ramadan was also celebrated by the Mogho Naba and most of the people within the kingdom—a fact that so surprised Binger that he wrote, "It is a most curious fact that, whether Moslem or not, all the blacks celebrate this feast."[16] The Moslems usually flattered the Mogho Naba and the other chiefs by pretending to believe that they had observed the month-long fast (which the Mossi called *no-lwere*, from *nore*, "mouth," and *lwere*, "to tie up") during Ramadan. Thus, whenever they visited the Mogho Naba or another chief during this period, they greeted him with the salutation *Ne no-lwere*, which means, "I greet you who are fasting." Similarly, the morning after the end of the fasting period, the ruler and his officials were ritually given millet water "to break their fast." The important point here is that everyone knew that the Mogho Naba's fast was a ritual fiction. Binger, who was with Boukary Naba at the end of Ramadan before this prince became Mogho Naba Wobogo, commented: "Boukary Naba is a Moslem in outward appearance only. When the prayers were about to begin, he asked me whether I was going to worship. I told him that this festival was not in accord with those of the Christians. He seemed to be delighted by the idea that the whites are not Moslems."[17]

Most Mossi chiefs celebrated the end of Ramadan in a grander manner than they did Tabaski. The members of the royal household joined the other inhabitants of the capital in their anxious vigil for the crescent moon that was to herald the start of the ceremonies. There was general rejoicing when the moon appeared, and all through the night palace guards fired shots and launched arrows into the air. The following morning, the Mogho Naba went to the mosque with his courtiers to attend prayers. Then he returned to his palace to await the Imam, who came to offer prayers of thanksgiving. The Mogho Naba gave him presents, and was visited by gift-bearing

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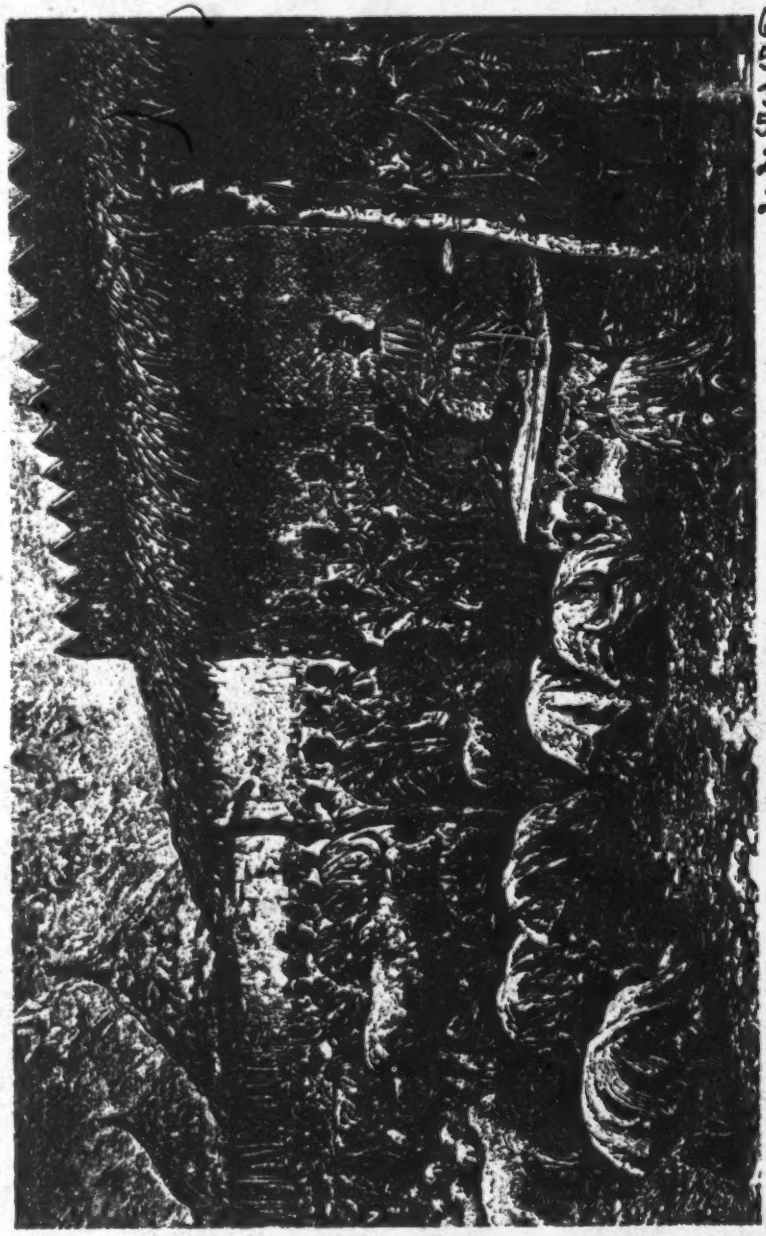

Visiers in the court of Moghn Nabn Sanum salute him in the traditional Mossi manner.
From Louis Binger, *Du Niger au Golfe de Guinée par le pays Kong et le Mossi, 1887–1889* (Paris, 1892).

[p. 178 - A]

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9. In Dim Delobson's account (p. 60), an unnamed wife of the Mogho Naba ran away, and he allegedly tried to follow her because she was the only person in his household who knew how to cook his favorite food. 000

It is interesting that the Mossi have a tradition in which their ruler undergoes the same experience as many a Mossi husband, namely, being betrayed by his wife. It is also interesting that Mogho Naba Waraga is the ruler named in this incident. He is the ruler who waged a five-year-long civil war with one of his vassals. It may well be that his ministers devised the myth about his wife in order to prevent him from leaving the capital to fight. [837]

10. The Mossi practice of tasting food before giving it to another person is obviously connected with the fear of poison. The Mossi believe that only a boorish person would give another person something to eat without first tasting it himself. [576]

11. The full significance of this ceremony is unclear, for the Mossi hesitate to talk about it. It is known that the "sacred fire" is linked to the nocturnal visits of the royal ancestors. But the relationship of the fire to another sacred fire kept in Koubri district (about seventeen miles from Ouagadougou) is not known. [372]

Faithful to Mossi tradition or ignorant of the true nature of the ceremony, Dim Delobson says nothing about the ceremony and does not mention the presence of the namtibo. However, he does report that the palace guards would kill anyone who approached the place where the rite was being performed (p. 62). [114]

12. There are several traditions concerning female regents. However, I believe that they may have their basis in the role the Mogho Naba's daughter played during the interregnum.

13. Mossi genealogies show that only in one case in which the nam passed from a Mogho Naba to his brother did the former Mogho Naba's sons receive districts from their uncle, the new ruler. Since it is difficult to believe that the eleven other Mogho Nanamse who were succeeded by their brothers died without issue, it can only be concluded that the descendants of a ruler who did not inherit the nam were ignored by their uncles in power.

14. To this council could be added other men whose experience was valued. For example, the Baloum Naba was called upon in 1942 to give advice about a successor to Kom.

15. Dim Delobson, pp. 130–32.

16. It is interesting that the sheepskin garb of the Mossi pretenders is similar to the dress of the chiefs among the smaller tribal groups of the Voltaic culture area. If we can assume that culture traits characteristic of ritual and ceremonial practices tend to persist longer than most other traits, we might have evidence that the complex Mossi state evolved from the political organizations found among the smaller local groups. [171] [174]

17. The "naming of a name" speech is part of most Mossi *rites de passage*, and is often used to brag about some achievement or to cast aspersions on one's enemies. Most newly elected monarchs pledge good government, brag about their elevation, and vilify their enemies.

In his inaugural speech Naba Kom II said, "When plenty of water falls during the rainy season, the rivers and seas are glad because they are enlarged." "Kom" means "water," and Kom's speech meant that he pledged to bring happiness to all his subjects.

Boukary Koutou insulted his listeners by declaring, "Even if a hundred ghosts join together, they cannot harm an elephant." He was called Mogho Naba Wobogo ("elephant").

18. It is said that if the amulets were stolen during the interregnum, the thief had to be elected Mogho Naba; if they were stolen afterwards, the ruler lost the basis for the mystical quality of leadership and authority he had inherited from his ancestors.

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shoulder; but when he arrives in the market, he calmly places his weapon on top of one of the sheds before he makes his rounds. The women do not carry any weapons to market except their "words" but even these are not often used because of the desire to avoid hostility—which the Mossi do not like to have disrupt one of their major institutions.

The rural market is the center of Mossi social life, and friends as well as enemies meet within its confines. What Mangin wrote some forty years ago is still true: "Every self-respecting Mossi—man or woman, child or elder—must go to market at least once in a while, were it only to look . . . and to be looked at, if he can put on some handsome clothes" (Mangin 1921 : 53). Except for the Moslems who are now experimenting with a form of Purdah, there are few persons who do not go to market. The absence of someone from the market for more than two consecutive occasions is a sure sign of illness, travel, or family crisis. As one man said to me, "I must go to market, and when I get there I look for three persons: my girl friend, my debtor and my enemy. If I do now know whether any of them are at the market I am ill at ease. And when I go to the market and do not see them all, the market is not good."

The lively character of the Mossi market will be discussed later, but throughout this kaleidoscope of activities certain consistencies can be discerned. For example, one notices many different kinds of greetings and salutations in the market place, but each one of them correctly indicates the exact relation or relationship between the persons involved. Young girls on passing each other on one of their innumerable circuits of the market bend their knees slightly and place both of their cupped hands on their own breasts. Only then will they stop and exchange news. At the end of the conversation they repeat the same greeting and continue their rounds. Both girls and women greet casual male acquaintances in the same way, but invariably kneel if the male stops and talks to them. Women sometime kneel when speaking to each other, but always do so when addressing any male relative of a respected category, who may then send them on errands such as buying tobacco from the vendors. A man who meets a female benefactor, such as a woman who has given medicine to one of his children, invariably kneels down before her. She may do the same thing out of respect for his male status. However, when a man meets either his mother-in-law or his father's sister, he is the one to kneel down in order to greet her. Two men who are equals normally shake hands, but if not, the junior in status or in age kneels down before his elder or superior. Sometimes a high status man will prevent his greeter from kneeling by raising him. When

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greeting a lower status benefactor, a man will get down and greet him from a kneeling position. It is because of this elaborate system of greeting, with the many opportunities thus provided for one person to slight another, that many important persons never go to the market. As a rule, the failure of any one person to give the required greeting to another when they meet in the market place is always an indication of strained relations between them.

The persons from whom an individual may buy goods, and the kinds of goods which may be purchased by one individual from another, are governed by convention and social relationships. A person may not buy anything from a relative except European goods. A man cannot buy any but cooked food in the market place, and often he asks a female relative or a passing female to buy it for him. To do the contrary is held to be unmanly and indicative of a bad character. A woman will not buy cotton cloth but will send a man to buy it for her. She would hate to have people believe that she has no male relative to weave it for her, or what is more likely, that she is too lazy to spin the cotton thread which would then be woven for her. A woman may purchase any type of commodity from other women, but she must be careful not to patronize men who are known to be libertines or with whom she is suspected of having an affair. She must also be careful about running errands for men, since people know that men often use this device to establish amorous relationships with women. Men also use this device to give presents, or to arrange secret meetings with them. If any man sees a female relative involved in any of these misadventures, he chases her away and more than likely curses the man, if he does not fight him. In any event, he warns the man to leave the woman alone.

The market is one of the few places where men and women can initiate relationships not sanctioned by their relatives. Under normal conditions marriages are arranged between unrelated individuals through the lineage members who establish "friendly" relationships. Two friends might ask their lineage heads for women to exchange as wives or the "friend" who has received more gifts from the other will give over a wife. Because the older men most often have goods and women at their disposal, they are usually the ones who receive wives. The result is that most young men have no wives, and until they inherit wives from lineage members, are continually seeking to establish intimate relations with women whom they meet on the market place. The technique which a young man employes to gain the favors of a woman he sees at market is highly stereotyped. First of all, he must ascertain that the woman in question is not a member of his maximal lineage or married to a member of his own lineage. A responsible

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What this really means is that the market is the main communication center of Mossi society and news of happenings in the region can be heard there. If a person is in an area one can be sure that the people in the market will know about him, or that he will sooner or later visit the market.

The young men who have returned from work in the cacao fields or towns of Ghana and the Ivory Coast add a great deal of color and excitement to the rural markets of contemporary Mossi country. During the time these young men spend away, they give a great deal of thought and planning to the show they hope to put on when they make the grand tour *(mane do)* of their district's market place. The best day for this is the day of the "great market" and regardles of what day many migrants return to their homes, they wait for that Friday before they show themselves publicly.

On the morning of that day, the typical migrant dresses in his best clothes, lends the remainder of his wardrobe to relatives, and together they go to pay homage to the chief during the morning ceremony *(Wend pous yan)*. The migrant offers the chief such presents as a small amount of money, an article of clothing or kola nuts, and replies to the chief's questions about the health and welfare of all Mossi in the area whence the migrant came, the whereabouts of "lost" migrants, the nature of the work the migrants were doing, and so on. As soon as the young man receives the chief's permission to leave, he goes to the market where he is quickly surrounded by *griots* who accompany him in periodic circumambulations of the market place, drumming and singing praises in honor of his ancestry. The migrant is also greeted warmly by his many friends to whom he then gives presents of money, beer and kola nuts. He acknowledges the general praise for having brought goods and clothing for his relatives and takes pride in seeing these relatives dressed in the cloths and clothing he has brought them. If young and unmarried, the migrant also seeks to take advantage of his new-found importance to make the first overtures to available young women or to renew his relationship with former paramours. Towards evening before going home, he rewards the *griots* with money and bear. Many a migrant attempts to prolong this feeling of grandeur by visiting other markets and by dressing up on subsequent grand market days, but after a few weeks he is re-incorporated into the ordinary market routine, and has to make room for the other newly-arrived migrants.

The market is also the place where important rites marking the changing social status of individuals are carried out. Under normal circumstances, the ceremonies attending the birth of a Mossi child are performed at home. When a woman has a number of stillbirths or

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market and set up their small tables to display all types of goods from trinkets to single lumps of sugar. And the more numerous young men, who have no goods but have money in their pockets, go to the leaf-covered sheds, place their weapons on top of them, and take seats from which to view the passing parade. Imperceptibly, the hum in the market increases as people find their places and greet one another with *Ne Raga*, the market greeting, until by 11:30 A.M. the whole market reverberates with sounds of drumming, cries of vendors, and the shrill voice of water hawkers and juvenile vendors. Now the market is in full swing.

From midday until about 3:30 P.M., the Mossi market is a sea of humanity—talking, laughing, arranging rendezvous, quarreling, selling, buying, parading, and (where youngsters are concerned) often crying for want of money to buy a desired object. The return of migrants lends additional color and excitement to the market as these young people walk about in their new clothes, encouraging the drummers to sing louder praises, the maidens to feel jealous of the clothes of the migrants' female relatives, the former migrants to reminisce about the days when they too had bright new clothes, and the young boys to dream of going off one day to obtain the things they need.

Men, noting that their female relatives are spending too much time looking over the wares of a vendor of European products or of the kola-nut seller, wander over ostensibly to help in the purchase but really to prevent love affairs. The failure to observe such a precaution may be the cause of the shouting a man hears in the distance, and off he hurries to see whether a lineage brother or a friend may need his aid. He may either get into the battle himself, or aid the Raga Naba and the other elders to chase the battlers out of the market place, or to take them to the chief. This may indeed restore some peace and good fellowship to the market.

Elders, now more interested in beer than in other pleasures, pass the heat of the market day under the beer sellers' shed. From time to time one of them may be interrupted by a young man bringing him three kola nuts, one or two of which are immediately broken and given to friends. However, when an oldster, whether a drinking pagan or a Moslem teetotaler, sees or overhears a young man buying four kolas, he may frown or smile in the knowledge that mischief is afoot. Loud-voiced predictions of the consequences of evil-doing may suddenly disturb the merrymakers as American missionaries speaking in perfect More (the language of the Mossi) appear and harangue the market people. Then, as suddenly, the *Americadamba* depart in their large cars, and the curious pagans, amused Catholics or hostile Moslems who had gathered to hear the gospel return to